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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

MEMORANDUM

June 25, 1956

TO : K. E. Fields, General Manager

FROM : C. L. Dunham, M.D., Director
Division of Biology & Medicine

SUBJECT: REPORT OF INJURY TO JAPANESE FISHERMEN

SYMBOL : BMA:BW

The following is a report of available information concerning a recent news story of Japanese fishermen reported to have been injured by fall-out. This matter was referred to at Meeting 1205, and Mr. McCool by memorandum of June 4, 1956, asked that we report any information we might have on the incident.

On June 5, 1956, there appeared in the newspapers, a report that a Japanese fishing vessel had been drenched with radioactive rain and that two crew members were affected. A copy of the United Press release is attached.

On June 20th, this Division received a copy of a message dated June 8th from Ambassador Allison to the State Department worded as follows:

"UP STORY ON MISUHO MARU BASED ON UNVERIFIED JAPANESE PRESS REPORTS AND DISCOUNTED CONFIDENTIAL AND UNOFFICIALLY BY JAPANESE RADIATION EXPERTS. FOREIGN OFFICE NOW ATTEMPTING OBTAIN ACCURATE REPORT. NO FOLLOW-UP PRESS PLAY."

The intermediate altitude trajectories (30,000 - 45,000 feet) were generally in the direction of the ship's reported position and also rain was reported to have fallen at about the same time as arrival of the air mass from Bikini. The ship's captain, according to the news report, reported there were 45 counts on May 28th and 1,250 counts on May 30th. These numbers are meaningless without information as to methods of measurements, etc. Knowing the type of device mentioned, however, and the general phenomenology of distribution of fall-out, it is exceedingly unlikely that the amount of fall-out at the distance of the ship (some 1,600 miles), even with rainfall, would have been adequate to produce the biological effects described for the ship's crew.

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NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM & SUN 6/5/56

H-BLAST IN ATOLL AREA
REPORTED BY JAPANESE

By the United Press.

TOKYO, June 5—A Japanese sea captain said today the United States appeared to have exploded a hydrogen bomb May 28 without warning to ships in the Bikini Atoll area.

Capt. Shinkichi Murata of the Mizuho Maru said his ship was drenched with radioactive rain. Two of his crew were reported suffering an acute shortage of white corpuscles.

1660 MILES AWAY

"We were 1660 miles from Bikini Atoll May 28 when a hydrogen device probably was exploded without warning," he said.

"It was raining that day and the entire crew wore rain-gear. Radioactivity then was only 45 geiger counts but it was 1250 on May 30. We washed the ship with soap and sea water."

Japanese weather observers have claimed the United States employed a hydrogen device at Bikini May 28. They based their claim on recordings of earth and atmospheric shock waves. The United States has neither confirmed nor denied the claim.

'ACUTE SHORTAGE'

Kyodo News Agency said today that physicians found an "acute shortage" in the white corpuscle count of two of the Murata's crew-members.

Examination of the crew came after the ship arrived at Niihama on Shikoku Island yesterday from New Caledonia and was found "highly radioactive."

The white corpuscle count of the remainder of the crew was found to be about normal.

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The Division has heard nothing further about the matter officially or unofficially (i.e. in correspondence from Japanese scientists or other sources).

Attachment:
UP report